

# ALL BLESSINGS TRACED TO THEIR SOURCE

## JOHN 15:16

*Ye have not chosen me but I have chose you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.*

**T**HERE is nothing more gratifying to the mind, than when in the employment of any one given blessing, we are able to trace it to its source, and can discover, both the author of it, and his kind intentions in giving it.

If I am made happy, in the possession, of even one of the most common mercies of life, that mercy, be it what it may, is made doubly sweet, when the hand of God is seen in the appointment. It is a mercy then, twice blessed. First, in respect to its own nature, and secondly, as coming to me, with a peculiar, and personal direction, from God. The Traveler, who, on some sultry mountain, discovers unexpectedly a cooling stream, to assuage his thirst, will drink it, with a tenfold pleasure, if in the moment of enjoyment he considers it as flowing for his refreshment, from the immediate gift of heaven. Nay, will it not be allowed, that, in the pleasing intercourse of

social life, our felicities are all heightened, from the consciousness of the good will with which the kindnesses of our friends are accompanied. If then in *natural* things, our enjoyments receive an increase from such causes, what an accession of happiness must it be in *spirituals*, when we are enabled to trace them up to him, and to his special appointment, who is the predisposing cause of all?

If I enjoy the gracious operations of the Holy Ghost in my soul; if the person, and gifts, and righteousness, of the Redeemer be dear to my heart; if I know what it is, *to have fellowship with the Father and with the Son Jesus Christ*; will not these distinguishing mercies be yet abundantly increased, both in sweetness, and in value, when they are discovered to be the result of that *everlasting love*, wherewith God hath loved his people, *before the foundation of the world*? Such views, serve to confirm, and no less at the same time to explain, the meaning of that saying of the Apostle's, when speaking of a divine appointment in all our mercies, he refers the whole into God's sovereign will; *who hath saved us and called us with an holy calling not according to our works but according to his own purpose and grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began* (2 Timothy 1:9).

And moreover, beside the enjoyment of the blessing itself, in those distinguishing properties of it, there are several other very interesting qualities, folded within its bosom. What method can be as effectual under God, to induce all the practical fruits of the gospel, as when, from pointing to the source, from whence all

grace issues, is necessarily implied, from whence, all must be looked for? And is it not, of all possible arguments, the strongest, and the best, both to saint, and sinner, to manifest that He, who is the Author, and Finisher, of salvation, is the only Being, from whom *every good and every perfect gift must come?* (James 1:17)

Tell me, you, who from a clear conviction of your own unworthiness, are ever ready, to ascribe your recovery, from sin, to salvation, *to the praise of the glory of his grace wherein he hath made you accepted in the beloved,* (Ephesians 1:6) tell me, what motive do you find equally powerful in prompting you *to show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light,* (1 Peter 2:9) as the consciousness, that *God hath chosen you in Christ before the foundation of the world, that you should be holy and without blame before him in love?* (Ephesians 1:4) Doth not this conviction, operate beyond any other, to induce you to *adorn the doctrine of God your Saviour in all things?* And if by divine grace you find yourself preserved in the path of duty, is it not truly refreshing to the soul to discover the cause, that *you are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works which God that before ordained that we should walk in them?* (Ephesians 2:10)

And no less let the Sinner say, if it be God's choice, and not man's desert; if all the difference between one man, and another, originates in Him, *who giveth to every one severally as he will,* (1 Corinthians 12:11) why should you question more than others, but that *you* may be the happy partaker of the same grace also? Surely, there

would be abundantly more reason to doubt receiving the divine favour, if that favour, was depending upon your desert of it, than if it be the sole result of unmerited bounty and goodness!

I have been led into this train of observation, from the perusal of the precious words, of the Lord Jesus in the text. *Ye have not chosen me but I have chosen you and ordained you that ye should go and bring forth fruit and that your fruit should remain that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name he may give it you.* Abstracted from any personal relation, which those words may be supposed to have, as more particularly addressed to the disciples of Christ, at that period, and age, of the Church, in which they were first spoken; they contain this plain, and important truth, which is not confined to any period, but in all ages must have the same obvious, and determined meaning; that the personal salvation, of every true believer in Jesus, is founded, not in human merit, but in divine favour, not in our choice of Christ, but in his choice of us; for, that *it is not of him that willeth nor of him that runneth but of God that sheweth mercy*; (Romans 9:16) or to sum it up, in the full comprehensive words of the Apostle, *for of him and through him and to him are all things, to whom be glory for ever and ever.* (Romans 11:30)

If you will analyze the several parts of the text, you will find, that they all bear a corresponding testimony, to this one, and the same leading truth. *Ye have not chosen me but I have chosen you.* No one I venture to think, after this declaration of Christ, can be such as Advocate for the free will, and merit of man, as to invert the order of these words, and fancy, the reverse, of

what the Lord Jesus hath said to be true. Depend upon it what *John* the Apostle observes, is a positive fact, and of universal extent; *if we love him, it is because he first love us.* (1 John 4:19)

And the *ordination*, which follows in the text, this choice of the Redeemer, as plainly manifest, that the grace which hath appointed to the *end*, hath also appointed suitable and sufficient *means* for its accomplishment. *I have ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit.* It is *all* in the divine appointment. *Thou O Lord* (saith the Church) *hast wrought all our works in us;* (Isaiah 26:12) or as the Lord expresses it himself, in another scripture; *from me is thy fruit found.* (Hosea 14:8)

Neither is this all. It would not indeed answer the purposes of salvation, if like abortions in the natural world, the setting fruit of the fairest blossoms, was liable to fall off; Jesus therefore adds one circumstance more, and that a very material one; I have not only ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, but *that your fruit shall remain.* It is an object of the highest moment, to the peace and comfort of the believer, to be well assured, that the grace which begins the work, will carry it on and complete it. And therefore, nothing can be more satisfactory, than to know, that being *chosen*, and *ordained*, by a will that is not his own, he shall be preserved by a grace, that is more than mortal; and *kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.*

And lastly, as a comprehensive expression, which conveys to the believer, the assurance of every blessing he may stand in need of, in passing on, through a life of grace, to glory; Jesus

hedges in the whole, of the many precious things in this text, with that delightful promise in the close of it, and founded in the security, of his own all prevailing intercession, *whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name he may give it you.*

I question, whether in the whole compass of scripture, a verse can be found, more copious in its contents, respecting those momentous doctrines of our most holy faith, than what is here contained. What I propose from it, as God the Spirit shall be pleased to enable me, is simply this; to shew you, that *the whole sum and substance of our redemption from beginning to end is included in this free, sovereign, and unmerited choice of God, in Christ Jesus.* This is the leading doctrine insisted upon in the text, and all the other parts naturally arise out of it. To this therefore alone, I shall limit your present attention.

In the accomplishment of this purpose, the arrangement of my discourse, will be; in the *first* place, to establish the certainty of the doctrine. And then *secondly*, to point to the practical effects which arise out of it. And, if God the Holy Ghost, shall be graciously pleased (which I most humbly implore,) to be our Teacher, in confirming the truth of the doctrine, by a personal application of it to our hearts, *we shall be enabled to assume the language of the Apostle, which he used to the Church of the Thessalonians, upon the same occasion, and say as he did,* we are bound to give thanks always to God for you brethren beloved of the Lord because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth. (2 Thessalonians 2:13)

In pursuit of the *first* object I proposed, which is to prove the truth of our blessed Lord's declaration in the text, *ye have not chosen me but I have chosen you*, the best method I humbly conceive, will be, by tracing *effects*, to their *causes*; which will fully demonstrate, that the first advance in the way of grace, evidently begins in God and not in man. For if, it can be shewn, that such things as accompany salvation, are altogether disproportioned, to the powers of man to produce, the inference will undeniably follow, that the appointment must be, in an higher ordination, and that ordination is God. And I venture to believe, that in no one circumstance of life, can this be more fully shewn, or perhaps equally so, than in the subject now under consideration.

The Scripture, in a tone of decision, which admits of no appeal, awfully declares, that we are by nature, not only in a fallen, sinful state, but so totally ruined in all our faculties, that even the knowledge of divine things, much less a predilection for them, nature, untaught, and unenlightened, by an higher power, never could attain. And the Apostle *Paul*, under the teaching of God the Holy Ghost, considers this point as a matter so certain, and incontrovertible, that he sets it down, as a fixed thing; *the natural man* (says he) *receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God for they are foolishness unto him neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned*. (1 Corinthians 2:14) And elsewhere he assigns the reason; *Having the understanding darkened being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them because of the blindness*

*of their heart*, (Ephesians 4:18) To suppose therefore, that characters of this description, should make the *first* advances in the renewed life towards God, would be as absurd, as to imagine a dead body, to arise by its own powers, to all the exercises of animal functions.

Equally inconsistent is it with the divine glory, and altogether destructive, of all the just conceptions, we can form, of the freedom, and sovereignty of God's grace, to suppose, that though it be admitted, God's choice is the *first* cause, yet, that choice, originated in the foreknowledge of God, that such as become the objects of his favour, would by their subsequent conduct, be found more deserving than others, and therefore, God foreseeing this, was directed in this predilection. This idea, is perfectly suited, to gratify man's pride, but becomes highly injurious to God's glory. And by the way, my Brother, let me beg of you, to mark this down, in the memorandums of your diary, as a never-failing maxim; that *whatever tends to inflate the mind with the least exalted notions of any thing good in itself by so much robs God of his honour, and man of his happiness*. Very sweet indeed I confess, is the reflection to the soul of the truly regenerate, when he can look back, and consider the change wrought upon him, that *he who was once darkness is now light in the Lord*. (Ephesians 5:8) And still more pleasing will be the view, when he can trace the blessed effects of this change, in his life, in the progressive path of that light, *which shineth more and more unto a perfect day*. (Proverbs 4:18) But in every review of his kind, there is a voice which accompanies it, and which the truly



gracious soul delights to hear, *who maketh thee to differ from another and what hast thou which thou didst not receive?* (1 Corinthians 4:7) That God's choice will be followed with the gift of God's grace in the heart, is unquestionable; for he that saith, *I have chosen you*, saith also, *I have ordained you that ye should go and bring forth fruit*. But to fancy, that his choice, is the result of some supposed latent worthiness in the object, and not of God's free and unmerited love, is to invert the very order of things, and to make the effect precede its cause.

Let us advance one step higher in the argument, in confirmation of this doctrine, and observe, that the term *grace*, becomes at once the most decided proof of the whole. For in fact, it looses its very name, if there be an atom of supposed merit in the receiver. It ceases then, to be a gratuitous act, but on the contrary, it partakes of the nature of a reward. *If it be of works* (saith an Apostle) *then it is no more of grace, for otherwise grace is no more grace*. (Romans 11:6) Nay, so far are the highly favoured objects of this bounty, from being considered, as contributing in the smallest degree, to the reception of it, that they are beheld, not barely as undeserving, but ill deserving; not simply as unworthy of mercy, but worthy of punishment. Grace therefore signifies, an act of unmerited clemency, bestowed upon a set of creatures, who in the very moment of receiving it, are justly deserving God's displeasure.

You will immediately perceive from this statement, how impossible it is, consistent with God's glory, for man to assume any merit to himself, respecting his salvation; either in the

original appointment, or in the after stages of grace. For if I fancy myself, even in the smallest possible degree, to have merited divine favor, the very character of grace looses its name. But if, (as is really the case) I see myself, in the very moment of becoming, the object of this distinguishing mercy, both in the first manifestations of it, and in all the after periods of life, as singled out from the throng of my fellow creatures, all alike unworthy, and all equally underserving; such views of grace, will then afford proper ideas, of what it really is, and compel the heart of every one, who is conscious of being the happy partaker of it, to cry out with the astonished disciple *Lord how is it that thou hast manifested thyself to me and not unto the world?* (John 17:6)

But it were to leave the subject unfinished, tho' confirming the doctrine, were we to rest here, without connected with it, some other delightful properties, which belong to the same. The fact once admitted, that all our mercies originate, in this predilection of grace, it must immediately follow, that as nothing new, or undetermined, could at any period arise in the divine mind, which has not existed there before; every purpose concerning salvation, must have been formed, in the eternal, and unchangeable purposes of God in Christ Jesus, before the world began. Hence therefore, a door of the most important nature, is at once thrown open, by the discovery of this leading truth; and all those sweet, and precious doctrines, of the Father's mercy, the Redeemer's love, and the Spirit's grace, are unfolded to view, and brought forward with a strength of testimony, that may indeed astonish the mind, but which nothing

can refute. Skeptics may question, and impiously arraign, both God's wisdom, and his goodness. But my province is, not to answer the angry accusations of the ungodly, but to satisfy the humble enquires of the just. The Apostle hath drawn, a beautiful model for imitation in this particular, which may serve as a guide, for every one, who supposes himself called upon to make reply to the presumptuous reasoning of the unhumbled mind. He borrows a figure from common life, of the *Potter*, exercising power over *the same lump of clay, to make one vessel unto honor and another to dishonor*; (Romans 9:21) and takes occasion therefrom to shew, that He, who hath made all things, and *for whose pleasure they are, and were created*, hath an unquestionable authority, to do what he will with his own. And to strike dumb in everlasting silence the profane tongue, which might be prompted to go further, and demand a reason; every thing in reference to his will, who hath appointed all, terminates in this; *shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?*

If I have said enough to answer the *first* object which I proposed from this subject, I come now to the *second*. Having I hope fully ascertained the certainly of the doctrine; to this will very properly succeed, the practical effects *arising* out of it.

*Some* have thought, that the doctrine is in itself so ill-calculated, to induce any effects of godliness, that it throws to the ground, the whole system of religion, and morality. And *others* have gone so far, as to insist upon it, that an attention to the means of grace, is superseded thereby, and become unnecessary. You will hear men of this complexion, not infrequently

demanding, to what use, can be the practice of any religious, or moral obligation? For if a man be chosen in Christ, he is eternally safe, let him do what he may; If he be not, he is sure to be lost, let him do what he can. But these are rather the sayings, of light and inconsiderate persons, than the sober and pious reflections, of the wise and serious. I venture to believe, that of all subjects tending under God's grace, to induce the greatest attainments in piety and virtue; the doctrine of being chosen in Christ to salvation and happiness, is the highest and the best. And I venture moreover to hope, that before I have finished the subject, I shall prove to the clearest demonstration, that no possible argument, is of equal persuasion, like this, to form the mind to the exercise of all those Christian graces, which unquestionably are among the truest evidences of the renewed life.

A few observations, on this branch of our subject, will set the matter in a clear point of view.

The Apostle *Paul*, after directing an animated discourse to the church at *Philippi*, in which he had been insisting, with great earnestness, on some of the leading doctrines of the gospel, makes this as the immediate and unavoidable inference of the whole. *Finally brethren whatsoever things are true whatsoever things are honest whatsoever things are just whatsoever things are pure whatsoever things are lovely whatsoever things are of good report if there be any virtue and if there be any praise think on these things* (Philippians 4:8). From hence nothing can be more evident than that, the apostle considered, a clear apprehension of the great blessings of redemption, and a conscious sense of being

personally interested in them, became the most powerful of all arguments, to an holy life and conversation. And indeed, if it can be supposed, that such motives should fail, every lesser consideration must prove ineffectual.

Let us examine this claim, under each of the great branches of duty, which constitute the devout, and social obligations; either as it concerns our deportment towards God, our Neighbour, or ourselves.

As it concerns *our duty towards God*. No appeal to the heart surely can be equal to this. For if a conscious sense, of having become the distinguished object of divine favour, when every thing on our part, justly made us the object of divine vengeance; if amidst the shipwreck of human nature, *you* my Brother, behold yourself as one, brought to shore, by an Omnipotent arm, while the carcasses of thousands, are floating before you; if, in direct opposition, to all your rebellion, ingratitude, and disobedience, God hath saved *you*, and called you with an holy calling; - *what* shall I say? if, while God says, *I knew that thou wouldest deal very treacherously and wast called a transgressor from the womb* (Isaiah 48:8) and yet notwithstanding all this, for *his great love wherewith he hath loved you even when you were dead in sin hath quickened you together with Christ* (Ephesians 2:5) can the imagination form to itself, any one argument like this, to stimulate to godliness and virtue? And will any one venture to suppose, that the mind, which is dead and insensible to such a claim as this, would be alive to any other?

Consider the subject also in another relation, as it concerns *the duty we owe our neighbour*. That the Apostle *Paul* thought the distinguishing mercy of God, to be the strongest persuasive in the mind, to lead to the practice of all the obligations, between man and man is evident; for upon a remarkable occasion, while exhorting the *Colossians*, to such duties, he enforces their observance from this very cause. *Put on* (says he) *as the elect of God bowels of mercies kindness humbleness of mind meekness longsuffering*. As if the consciousness of being so chosen, and so distinguished, by divine mercy, impelled the heart, to the observance of all tenderness and compassion. And the Apostle urges yet further, that in the unavoidable offences of life, which from the frailty of our poor fallen nature, after all endeavours to the contrary, will come; believers of all men are called upon, *to forbear one another and to forgive one another even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven them*. (Colossians 3:12,13). And who is there, that can arise from before the mercy seat, under a deep sense of being remitted ten thousand talents, and can go forth and take a fellow sinner by the throat, for the payment of an hundred pence? Surely, the unanswerable appeal of the Apostle, can never cease to vibrate in the ear of every one, who hath heard, and *knows the joyful sound; beloved if God so love us how ought we also to love one another!* (1 John 4:11)

And in respect to the blessed effects, which a just sense of being chosen in Christ is calculated to produce in the heart in *the duty we owe ourselves*, it is a well known character, and in face the truest evidence that the work of grace is begun in the soul,

that *they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts. For if any man be in Christ he is a new creature.* (2 Corinthians 5:17)

I challenge the whole world therefore, to bring forward such motives as these, and which naturally (or rather I should have said graciously) spring out of this doctrine, for reforming the heart, and regulating the morals of mankind.

But though I content, that these considerations, are superior to every other, to induce such a train of conduct in the heart of man, yet I am free to confess that neither these considerations, or any other, are in themselves, of sufficient influence, to give a new tide, and current to the affections. It must be *God who worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure.* (Philippians 2:13) *All our sufficiency is from Him.* (2 Corinthians 3:4) But herein lieth the excellency of our present doctrine. For it is a circumstance intimately connected with our subject, and which I particularly beg none will overlook, that the exercise of those Christian graces, do not depend upon the fickle purposes in man, but in the unchangeable love of God. Remember the text. He that *chooseth* his people, *ordaineth* them also, to bring forth fruit. And the same grace which appoints, affords power to perform. The charter of grace runs in these words. *I will give them one heart and one way that they may fear me for ever. I will make an everlasting covenant with them that I will not turn away from them to do them good but I will put my fear in their heart that they shall not depart from me.* (Jeremiah 32:39-40) *Here then lies the security; and which no other*

*source beside can give, neither any motives of moral persuasions enforce. God undertakes for the accomplishment of the whole, in answering both for himself, and for his people. I will not, (saith God) and they shall not.*

And what is the real matter of fact, as it is found in the experience of mankind. Look I beg of you abroad into the world, and see, whether among those who profess their conviction in this doctrine they are at the same time, less devout towards God, less just, or friendly to their neighbours; or whether, they are immoral in themselves. You know the reverse to be the case. For if they are true to their principles, they are on the contrary, *examples to believers in word in conversation in charity in spirit in faith in purity.* They know, and their lives bare testimony to that knowledge, that *the grace of God which bringeth salvation hath appeared unto all men teaching them that denying ungodliness and worldly lust they should live soberly righteously and godly in this present world looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.* And this is, and must be, the one uniform desire, of their hearts, *the he who gave himself for them that he might redeem them from all iniquity might purify them unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works.* (Titus 2:12,13,14)

I have only in conclusion to beg of God the Spirit, to make our subject profitable, both to Saint and Sinner, under his blessed influence.



To the *former*, I would say, do not forget my Brother, to seek grace from God upon every occasion in life to accustom yourself to trace all your mercies up to this fountain head. Depend upon it, that you will find a double sweetness therefrom, in every one of them. Even the most common providence, will then appear to you, not without some special commission from Him, whose wisdom is everlastingly employed for you, and whose faithfulness assures you that *all* things how trifling soever they may seem, or how unpromising soever they may appear, *work together for good to them that love God and who are the called according to his purpose*. And tell me if you can, what life can be so pleasant, as that life of faith, which is for ever living on the unchangeable purposes of God in Christ, issuing as they are, from an everlasting love, and manifesting themselves in all the multiform methods of his grace.

And to the *latter*, I would very affectionately observe, that however unconcerned you may at present fancy yourself to be, in all the grand interests of this doctrine, do not depart my Brother without taking with you a short observation to correct those ideas.

As it is the divine favour, and not our merit, which directs God in the choice of his people, so is it from the same free, and sovereign cause, all mercies flow. It is his grace, and not your worth, which hath fixed the bound of your habitation. It is from the same grace, that your lot is cast in this blessed land, where God is truly known. It is equally from the same predisposing grace, that you are this day brought under a preached gospel. Is

it not then reasonable to infer, that if so much grace hath been displayed, in providing the *means*, may not the whole be displayed, on purpose to the accomplishment of the end? Ask your own heart a few questions. Do you bless God, that you were born in those highly favoured climes, where the pure gospel is preached? Is it a matter of thankfulness with you that you are brought under the sound of it this day? And would it be the joy of your heart, *to know the truth that the truth may make you free*? If your heart can truly say yes, to these enquires; depend upon it, though you know it not, you are not far, from the kingdom of God. You see this day around you many, that were once, as you are and who are now, they happy partakers of God's unspeakable gift. You may behold them in the enjoyment of this rich mercy, reading their pardons on their knees, in transports of rejoicing. Beg of God, then to be made receivers of the same grace. Say to the Father of mercies in that sweet scripture *the companions hearken to thy voice cause me to hear it*. (Song of Songs 8:13) In a word, let a man of this description, make the same experiment in spiritual things, which is done in natural concerns. Suppose a company of beggars, at the gate of a Prince, waiting for a supply, without which, they must perish for ever; and suppose, that he hath not only bestowed the mercy to thousands, and tens of thousands, yet his bounty is not at all diminished, but remains the same, in an endless profusion; and suppose moreover, that he hath caused it to be proclaimed, that *all that come he will in no wise cast out*! Would any poor perishing creature depart, while such a proclamation of mercy is

sounding? Would he despair, under such encouraging circumstances?

I add no more, but an earnest prayer, that God the Holy Ghost, may awaken many a heart and send home many a humble mind, under the pleasing assurance, of being personally interested, in the words of the Apostle; *Ye are a chosen generation a royal priesthood an holy nation a peculiar people that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light which in time past were not a people but are now the people of God which had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.* (1 Peter 2:9,10).